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Security And Foreign Policy-From Nehru To Indira: Comparative Analysis and Relevance

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There are several examples in the political history of the world of great thinkers whose thought was developed in all its ramifications by their equally illustrious disciples, like the thought of Kautilya by Chandragupta, Lord Budha by Ashoka, Plato by Aristotle, Karl Marx by Lenin and Mahatma Gandhi by Pandit Nehru. But this is a unique example of a daughter, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, meriting comparison with her father, Pandit Nehru.

The comparison of the defence and foreign policy of Nehru with that of Indira Gandhi is a debatable proposition. However, the moot point, in this regard, is whether they are different merely in style and emphasis or in fundamental outlook and content, in mere functioning or policy as such. Attempts were made during the life - time of Mrs. Gandhi to compare her style, outlook, ideology and the outcome of her defence and foreign policy with those of Nehru. However, the final assessment of the role of Mrs. Gandhi in shaping the foreign policy of India could not have been made during her life - time. Now neither Nehru nor Indira are alive. But the basic principles of India's foreign policy carried out by both of them are still in practice and relevant even after decades of their death. Moreover, as regards defence and foreign policy in particular, Nehru is generally known as idealist, whereas Indira is realist. Whatever may be the arguments of idealist and realist schools of thought in this context, the whole paradigm of foreign policy of India followed during the time of Nehru and Indira is hotly debated in the academic circles as well as also at

mass level even now. While making analysis of the foreign policy adopted by the subsequent Prime Ministers like Rajiv Gandhi, AB Bajpayee and Manmohan Singh etc., people do not miss to mention Nehru and Indira. Nehru, indeed, led the foundations of foreign policy of newly born India as an architect that was subsequently further built up and carried out by Indira and others till now, although differences are also visible.

In view of the above, this Paper attempts to concentrate in making a comparative and critical analysis of the defence and foreign policy of Nehru and Indira Gandhi and to focus on its relevance in the present context.

Nehru started his career in foreign affairs at the age of 32 when Indian National Congress adopted a resolution proposed by him in 1920 expressing in a general way a desire to establish co-operation with the neighbouring countries. It is remarkably strange, Mrs. Gandhi also for the first time was seen on international platform at the same age in 1948-49 in Commonwealth Conference, London, and Asian Nation's Conference, New Delhi, although Nehru was involved in foreign affairs for 43 years in his life time from 1920-1964, where as Mrs. Gandhi was so involved for 35 years from 1949-1984.

At the end of 1926, Nehru attended Brussel's Congress. A few months later he visited USSR with his father Motilal Nehru and had talked with central executive committee chairman, M.Kalinar and foreign minister, G.V. Chicherin. Like wise, Mrs. Gandhi also started learning diplomacy from her father. She accompanied Nehru several places on various occasions, particularly the Commonwealth Conference, London in 1948 and UNO, Paris, USA, USSR,

the Crowning of Queen Elizabeth (where she met Winston Churchill), China in 1954 where she met Chou-En-Lai.

Nehru's Style of Security and Foreign Policy:

Though there are many instances, we would take only a few like Kashmir issue, Korean issue and Chinese issue to highlight Nehru' style of defence and foreign policy.

1. Kashmir issue - The Pathan tribes of Pakistan started invasion of Kashmir on 22 Oct.1947 On Oct. 24 the Maharaja of Kashmir appealed to India for help. India had to take a quick decision and further rush her troops to save Kashmir. But Nehru feared that direct military action would lead to war with Pakistan. Ultimately he decided to send the troops on 27Oct. He took four critical days in taking urgent decision. On the same day the first Indian battalion was air lifted to Srinagar. It had arrived just in time. " A few minutes later the airfield might well have been in enemy hand."[1]

The Indian troops repulsed the invading forces from Srinagar, pressing it back beyond river Uri and thus halted the invader's offensive operation. That was the best and the last opportunity in his lifetime to get the Kashmir problem

[1]. Yuri Nesenko, Jawaharlal Nehru and India's Foreign Policy, Sterling Publications, New Delhi, 1977, p. 40.
2 Ibid, p. 43.
3 Ibid, p. 105.
4 Ibid, p. 102.
5 Ibid, 96.
6 Ibid, 98.
7Ibid, 97.
8 Girilal Jain, The Time of India, Bombay, Nov. 4, 1984,p. 8
9 AS Abraham, The Times of India, Bombay, Nov 9, 1984, p. 8.
10 Ibid
11 Girilal Jain, The Times of India, Bombay, Nov 4, 1984.
12 G. Talwalkar, The Times of India, Bombay, Nov, 19, 1984,
13 Indian Express (Bombay), Nov. 11, 1984.
14MS Rajan, India's Foreign Relations During The Nehru Era Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1976 p. vii.
15 Maharashtra Herold , Pune, Nov. 1, 1984.
[16] Ibid.
17. MS Rajan, India's foreign Policy----- p.viii.

permanently solved. He could have ordered the army to clear the entire territory of Kashmir, but he did not. It would be quite interesting to speculate what Mrs. Gandhi would have done in similar circumstances.

Britain and USA wanted that India should refer the Kashmir issue to the UNO so that it could pave the way for their interference. Nehru acted accordingly. He referred this question to Security Council on Dec 31, 1947. Later on this decision of Nehru proved to be a diplomatic blunder. He failed to study the actual international situation. Later he himself realized his mistake. Many years later in April, 1964, shortly before Nehru's death, Mrs. Gandhi said, probably expressing Nehru's own views, that "the Kashmir issue should not have been sent to the UNO"[2].

2. Korean issue - The Korea war started on June 25,1950. India voted for the American draft resolution in the Security Council on 25 June, which laid the blame on the Korean People's Democratic Republic. On June 27, 1950, the Security Council adopted the second resolution proposed by USA recommending Collective Security. India didn't vote. On 28 June 1950, India announced its support to the second resolution. According to this resolution, India was supposed to give military support to South Korea. This resolution was known to enable the US imperialist to mask their intervention in Korea under the flag of the UNO which was supported by India also. Later on July 3, 1950, Nehru said that India could not give military support to South Korea.[3] This was the fourth change in Nehru's attitude towards Korean issue within eight days only. Finally Nehru sent a medical mission to assist the UN Force.

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3. Chinese issue - Nehru adopted the policy of appeasement towards communist China right from its birth. India was the second non-communist state to recognize the communist government of China on December 30, 1949. it always supported China's membership of the UNO . On the other hand, China always treated Nehru as " watch-dog of imperialism".[4]

Tibetan authorities expelled the Kuomintang mission from Lhasa and proclaimed the "Independence of Tibet".[5] On October 25,1950,China started " liberation of Tibet"[6]. India simply lodged a protest with the government of China and kept quiet. Later, Nehru recognized China's sovereignty over Tibet as a gesture of goodwill.

Once again Nehru missed the bus and could not utilize the opportunity and ultimately he was badly humiliated in 1962.By refraining from recognizing Tibet as a sovereign, independent state between 1947 and 1949,at a time when neither the Chinese communists nor the nationalists could have effectively intervened, India lost the opportunity of bringing Tibet into the form of independent nations and simultaneously of ensuring the creation of a buffer-state between India and China[7].

Indira Gandhi's style of Security and Foreign Policy:

Unlike Nehru, Mrs. Gandhi created the impression of a strong and determined diplomat. Nehru was an intellectual whose actions were marked by a gentlemanly diffidence. He could have been an eminent writer but drifted into politics to which, of course, he gave everything he had. But Mrs. Gandhi, it seems was born to be a world politician.

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Taking over the reigns of the government on Jan. 24,1966, Mrs. Gandhi soon undertook her first official tour of Paris, London, Moscow and Washington in March to acquaint these governments with her tune of thinking. She appealed to President Johnson to stop bombing North Vietnam and reconvene the Geneva Conference, which irked Washington. In 1968 she revived National Integration Council and stated, "It was unfortunate that we were lulled into a sense of complacency after the tremendous upsurge of unity at the time of the Chinese attack in 1962".[8]

Unlike Nehru's policy on Tibet, Indira Gandhi decided the annexation of Sikkim strongly and integrated it with India.

Mrs. Gandhi adopted the policy of positive and independent non-alignment in her dealings with the super powers. No power, however great, could trifle with India when she was at the helm of its affairs. She strongly denounced the American aggression or interference in Vietnam, Grenada, West Asia, Central America, Africa and Indian Ocean and British attack on Falklands. On the other hand, she also criticized the march of soviet forces into Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. It was her bold decision to recognize the present government of Kampuchea and the SWAPO as the real representative of Namibia.

With Bangladesh war in 1971, Mrs. Gandhi established her leadership and received acclaim both at home and abroad, for the political and strategic acumen, she displayed. Even Atal Bihari Bajpai – a strong critic of Mrs. Gandhi – compared her with "Bhawani",[9] though subsequently he denied his remarks.

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Mrs. Gandhi was a very proud person. India, as we know, faced a grave crisis in 1971 and urgently needed Soviet military supplies and assurance of political support. And yet when she visited Moscow in September that year she refused to open negotiation on the first day with Kosygin, (Prime Minister) because he was not the top boss. It was negotiated only when Brezhnev (President) was available on the next day. Similarly, on the subsequent visit to Washington in connection with the same Bangladesh problem, " she was so icily cold to Nixon that he almost froze."[10] Examples of such instances can be multiplied.

Her strength of character, determination and perseverance were demonstrated when she was out of power for about three years from 1977 to 1979. During this period, she visited London. It was rather strange that the world leaders – governmental and non-governmental – met her so warmly and the world was surprised to see her popularity at the global stage.

One common remark, as Girilal Jain said, in Pakistan when Bhutto was rotting in jail with hangman's noose tightening round his neck would illustrate the point. " Any number of Pakistanis said that if Indira Gandhi had been in power (the Janata was in office then), she would have sent commandos to rescue him."[11]She would, of course, have done nothing of this kind but Pakistanis believed that she would have.

Her last tenure as Prime Ministership was also full of achievements. India hosted the 7th Non-aligned Summit in Mar, 1983. Mrs. Gandhi took the chair of the Summit consisting of more than 100 member-countries for the first time in its history of which her father was the principal founder. It was she who

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stressed the South- South Dialogue and boosted the morale of the Third World. Mrs. Gandhi again presided with great distinction over the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in New Delhi in Nov 1983. Implicit in her remark on this occasion was the determination that she had a job to do it come what may. Her main objective – building of a powerful India which would demand and secure a place worthy of this once great civilization in the comity of nations- was worth the best effort, that the end would justify the means and that she was the instrument of India's destiny.[12]

Comparative Analysis

Now neither Nehru nor Indira Gandhi are alive. This is the appropriate time for a comprehensive and objective assessment of the foreign policy perceptions of the father and the daughter. This cannot be concluded, as noted above, that Nehru being an idealist always ignored the national interest and Mrs. Gandhi's era being realistic was full of achievements in the interest of nation.

On many occasions, Nehru protected the interest of the country too, as did Mrs. Gandhi. Mrs. Gandhi also missed the proper opportunity to the national interest. No doubt, Nehru made mistakes in 1947-49 on Kashmir and Tibet issues, as noted above, and could not draw up suitable and practical defence and foreign policies in the interest of the country But Mrs. [i]Gandhi also made the same mistake in 1971 by not occupying the Pakistan territory up to Lahore. Had she done so, India would have been in a strong position to bargain political / territorial issues with Pakistan, though 1971 war was the greatest achievement of Mrs. Gandhi in particular and India as a whole. After almost 2000 years the country fought unitedly and won a war.

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The pillars of the foreign policy of Nehru are anti-colonialism, equality of all races, non-alignment-which meant hostility to none, but deliberate detachment from competitive power blocs, a determination to judge international issues on their merits and to exercise freedom of action on the basis of such judgement, recognition of Asia and Africa- as newly emerging and vital elements in world politics, relaxation of international tensions and peaceful approach towards achieving disarmament and settlement of disputes without recourse to violence and war. Mrs. Gandhi followed the same pillars in principle and practice framed by Nehru. But her style of functioning was obviously not the same.

Mrs. Gandhi's policy towards India's neighbours was controversial because she was regarded in same quarters as "imperial".[13] U.S. supply of most sophisticated arms and Chinese nuclear help to Pakistan, unfriendly relations with Sri Lanka on Tamil issue and involvement of US-Western interest in it, proposal of 'Zone-of-Peace' by Nepal against the interest of India and super powers rivalry in the Indian ocean at the peak happened during Mrs. Gandhi's period.

Nehru as an individual had his faults but his policy as such was reasonably sound in the circumstances in which it was formulated and implemented.[14] It was altogether a different context - domestic and international - in which Nehru carried out the foreign policy. Had Mrs. Gandhi been the Prime Minister during those days she would have pursued the same path. It was a different set of circumstances which made Mrs. Gandhi adopt a different style and outlook in international affairs. Talking about her father Mrs. Gandhi

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herself disagreed with the assessment that Nehru did not pay enough attention to defence. She said about the Chinese attack in 1962: " We saw no reason why we should be attacked. Here was a peaceful nation which was not threatening anybody. We did not have forces on the border with China and so from that point of view one can say that we should have thought of this before, but that is hindsight".[15]

There is a furious controversy about the idealistic and ethical content of Nehru's foreign policy, in spite of Nehru's own very clear and categorical views on the subject. He knew himself that he was not a Plato's 'Philosopher-King'. He was as realistic as Mrs. Gandhi. Though he was a disciple of the greatest idealist of the time-Mahatma Gandhi, undoubtedly he was the practical architect of the Indian Foreign Policy- the most suitable in the circumstances.

Under the leadership of Nehru, India happened to be the first state to have pursued a policy that was new in the history of international relations- the policy of non-alignment. The foundation of this policy was not only the vision of Nehru but also the need of the time in the interest of India. In this context, Mrs. Gandhi said, " the foundation is a solid one. My father had his feet on the earth too". [16]

The shaping of Indian foreign policy – particularly non-alignment was largely influenced by international development after World War II, such as, the weakening of forces of imperialism, growth of the forces of democracy and progress, the breaking away of a number of countries in Europe and Asia from the capitalist system and the formation of a world socialist system, the upsurge of the national liberation movements and beginning of the collapse of the colonial system, new alignment of forces in the world arena, cold war in full

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swing and a stage of armed fear and finally the formation of military pacts like NATO and Warsaw Pact.

Moreover, domestic situations also widely influenced the shaping of foreign policy. The domestic context in which that policy was formulated was the goal of the socialistic pattern of society- a society which, while deriving from the basic principles of both-the communist and the western societies, was meant to be specific to the Indian background and conditions. It sought and received economic assistance from both the camps in its efforts to convert a stagnant and capitalistic economy into a modern socialistic one. The three guiding forces behind the domestic development under Nehru were political democracy, economic development and secularism.[17] Hence Nehru had to formulate a foreign policy which would ensure the domestic growth in various aspects.

In such international and domestic circumstances, Nehru needed to formulate the foreign policy of a newly independent but poor and partitioned country. Therefore, the policy of non-alignment - virtually mixed-alignment - was preferred to ensure the economic growth of the country through mixed – economy. Like India, other Asian-African countries those who were newly independent or still fighting for their liberation were facing almost the same situations. Hence, it was a wise decision of Pt. Nehru to organize such countries to fight against the common problems for achieving common goal. In this context he chose the policy of anti-colonialism, equality of races, non-alignment and peaceful settlement of disputes so that the Asian-African newly emerging elements could come to a common platform and achieve their national goals without recourse to violence and war.

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Mrs. Gandhi Was not a political visionary in a away her father was, but a practitioner of Real Politic. For her, raison d'etre, in the end, overrode everything else. If Nehru was a visionary he also suffered the humiliation of 1962. Mrs. Gandhi may not have had her gaze fixed on Himalayan height of political idealism, but at heart she spared the country that kind of reserve. Moreover, she gave it the heady intoxicant of spectacular victory. She may not have radiated warmth towards the country's neighbours, but she never let them take India for granted.

But the most remarkable achievement of Nehru in foreign policy was that he gave a country as poor and weak as India- a moral voice in world politics that more than compensated for its lack of economic and military muscle. Under Mrs. Gandhi, India's power – military technological and economic- grew manifold. As a result its influence in global affairs, while lacking the moral quality of the Nehru era, is more directly related to its true strength. That strength may not always have been used sagaciously but to have built it up so rapidly and formidably is a major accomplishment.

Credit, of course, goes to Mrs. Gandhi for organizing the 7th Non-aligned summit, Commonwealth Conference and Simla Pact with Bhutto, but the circumstances in which Nehru organized the Bandung Conference (1955) and non-alignment organization show his superb understanding and mature organizing capability with a real sense of diplomatic outlook and emphasis.

Relevance:

Now both Nehru and Indira are out of scene for decades. Meanwhile India has crossed many mile-stones. Geo-strategic, socio-political and economic scenario, both at international and national level, have been

drastically changed. In this situation, are Nehru and Indira still relevant in respect to their thoughts, outlook, emphasis, contents and styles of defence and foreign policy?

First of all let us take the policy of non-alignment in the present context. The world is no longer bipolar due to Soviet collapse. In the present unipolar scenario, the term 'non-alignment' is irrelevant. However, such countries including India are still underdeveloped or developing and are also under the grip of imperialist. So long this situation continues, the objectives of the policy of non-alignment, followed by Nehru and Indira, are relevant.

Second, the friendly relations with neighbouring countries continue to be the core of Indian strategy in the given geo-strategic reality. Kashmir issue remains the same as used to be during Nehru-Indira era, despite Manmohan Singh's commitment to move forward more than half the distance. Relation with Bangladesh also remains unchanged. Treaty of friendship, 1949 and 1950 with Bhutan and Nepal respectively are yet to be adequately updated. Border dispute with China and Pakistan are unsettled so far. Situation with Myanmar and Sri Lanka are the same despite some positive efforts made from Indian side. It is, therefore, Nehru-Indira's policy, by and large, is being followed till now.

Third, India's earlier stand/declarations/commitments on NPT, CTBT and other international treaties remain in practice even after acquiring nuclear weapon. USA is a new strategic partner but yet to be tested whether it is as reliable as used to be the USSR in the past, despite civil-nuclear agreement.

Fourth, internal security/non-strategic threats, in the meanwhile, has increased manifold, particularly in the areas of terrorism, insurgency, Naxalites, communalism, social-justice, political instability, criminalisation of politics, corruption in public life, underworld economy, dynasty in politics etc. It

appears to be a greater threat than the external one. India needs Nehru's vision and Indira's determination at this juncture.

Fifth, Nehru's initial style of functioning and emphasis on development and diplomacy over defence and subsequent balancing act in this regard, based on 'trial and error,' may be fatal for the present leadership to follow. Indira' policy on Bangladesh and Rajiv's attempt of IPKF towards Sri Lanka are the history. Relevance of such acts is always the matter of self confidence, people's support and ground reality.

Conclusion

We, may therefore, conclude that the differences in the defence and foreign policies of Pt. Nehru and that of Mrs. Gandhi are merely of style and emphasis because of the changing nature of circumstances and situations at home as well as abroad. Moreover, both of them are the pace makers, they can never be irrelevant at any point of time.

References